

Site M:26/10/22

Rockville Christian Church/Bell Tower Building

101 West Jefferson Street, Rockville

Built: 1893

Private/Restricted Access

This example of vernacular church building was done by local builder Edwin M. West, a member of the Rockville Christian Church congregation. He used a mixture of familiar elements he had previously used in his residential commissions, combined with Gothic detailing thought appropriate for ecclesiastical buildings.

It is of brick laid in common bond with molded water table and high stone foundation. The multi-level tower on the southeast corner was also used on the Jerusalem Church(built at the same period). The building is decorated with saw tooth pattern verge board, pierced bracketing on side facades, Gothic hooded entrance gable and lancet windows. The rear facade and interior of the altar area were rebuilt after a 1953 fire. The current owners have adapted the church for law office use and incorporated the stained glass windows and carved and moulded railing and pulpit into their decor.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## State Historic Sites Inventory Form

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

### 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Rockville Christian Church

and/or common Bell Tower Building

### 2. Location

street & number 101 West Jefferson Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town Rockville ☐ vicinity of congressional district 8

state Maryland county Montgomery

### 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

### 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name John Bell, esq.

street &amp; number 101 West Jefferson Street telephone no.: 762-1717

city, town Rockville state and zip code Maryland 20850

### 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse liber 5975

street &amp; number folio 605

city, town Rockville state Maryland

### 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title National Register (W. Montgomery Avenue historic district) - 1974

date Locally designated historic district - 1974 ☒ federal ☒ state ☒ county ☒ local

pository for survey records City of Rockville

city, town Rockville state Maryland 20850

## 7. Description

Survey No. M-26/10/22

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Rockville Christian Church was erected in 1893 on lot #52 at the corner of Jefferson and Adams Streets. Edwin M. West, a local builder/carpenter, used a mixture of gothic and familiar residential elements on this structure. The three bay by three bay brick structure was laid in common bond and has a molded water table. It is 2 1/2 stories over a raised stone foundation. The roof is a blue slate, laid in patterned courses. There is a multi-level tower anchoring the southeast corner of the building.

The front (south) facade borders Jefferson St. The broad gable roof has a simple vergeboard decoration of sawn wood in a saw-tooth pattern. Under this gable is a raised entry with a pointed-arched steeply-roofed hooded gable with splayed ends. The recessed double door is topped by a lancet window. Another entry on this facade is located further east, and provides contrast by use of an elliptical arch and fan light over the recessed double door.

At the southeast corner is the multi-level, slightly projecting tower which rises from a cubical shape, through an octagonal louvered belfry level and ends in a conical turret with cedar shingles and a patterned slate roof. There are shallow molded buttresses at the corners on the second level. The turret is similar to that on Mr. West's own house at 114 West Montgomery Avenue, built three years earlier. A crocketed copper finial tops the turret on the Church building.

The main facade on this elevation is pierced by narrow slit windows on the second story on either side of the main door. A pair of round-headed louvers takes the place of windows over the main gabled entry. The second level of the tower has round windows over moulded, recessed brick arches.

The building stretches three bays from front to back; the east facade borders Adams Street. This east side has three large stained glass pointed-arch windows, and a brick water table. On this side the under-eave brackets are thick and knob-like with center holes. Horizontal lightning rods run the length of the building, held in place by copper holders in an anthemion shape. There is an interior brick end chimney to the rear of this facade.

The rear (north) side has been altered by removal of the main altar window and the connection of this building with the one-time Education building to the west. Of interest is the use of molded brick piers which bracket the altar window area; these piers have no structural purpose, but echo the width of the chimneys rising from the roof above them. New brick work and a square window have replaced the altar window. There is an entrance from this facade.

Continued on P. 7.1

ROCKVILLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
#7 CONTINUED

The west side of the building has been partially hidden since the joining of the two buildings. The three stained glass windows on this side are extant, although two of them are now incorporated in the interior; they decorate the vestibule/hall of the building and one serves as transom lighting for the entry into the reception area. The 1 1/2 story brick Education Building is two bays by three bays and is connected to the west side of the church by a brick hyphen. It has many-paned windows with louvered shutters, and a paneled door on the east facade.

The north end of the interior was first remodeled after a serious fire in 1953 destroyed most of the altar area. This area was then designed by architect Lester Burns.

The current owners have taken pains to adapt this building without needless loss of its unique character and atmosphere. The altar area was adapted for use as a reception area, utilizing the pulpit, paneled altar enclosure and fine classic carved moulding. The sanctuary has been divided into individual offices, each with a stained glass window, but the partitions are sufficiently open and low so as to retain a feeling of the original use.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. M: 26/10/22

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates**      1892      1893      **Builder/Architect**      Edwin M. West

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The old Rockville Christian Church is a well-executed example of vernacular expression in a Church building, a local builder's statement of faith in brick and wood. The Church also represents a 75 year struggle by a dedicated band of Christians to succeed as a congregation, culminating in this building. Edwin West's only known public building has been successfully adapted for modern use without major exterior alteration.

In the early days of Montgomery County, the scanty and scattered population necessitated circuit riders and shared pastors among several localities. The fledgling Rockville Academy welcomed these local ministers as teachers in the early 19th century. About 1835, a native of Ireland, William McClenahan, was head of the Academy's English Department. He was also meeting with like-minded Christians in preaching and study groups, held at his home or the Academy. Those he baptized in the faith were known as Disciples of Christ in America.<sup>1</sup>

Information on McClenahan's ministry in Rockville is sparse, but we do know that he owned the Brewer House (#26/9) on Falls Road in the years between 1824 and 1841.<sup>2</sup> Scharf reports the names of those he "immersed" in 1835.<sup>3</sup> His obituary appeared in 1856 after he had left the County to settle in Baltimore; he died at age 66.<sup>4</sup> (There was also an ad in a 1840 Rockville newspaper for a Bakery and Millinery store run by William McClenahan, and it is possible that the sewing and baking done by the ladies of the congregation may have been sold there to raise funds for the group.)<sup>5</sup>

The more established Presbyterians, one of whose ministers (Rev. Mines) was also teacher and principal of the Rockville Academy, had purchased a site for a house of worship in 1832. This building was located at the northwest corner of Jefferson and Adams Streets.<sup>6</sup>

In 1858 the Presbyterians built a new church across from the Courthouse and sold this lot (#52) to William Braddock for \$300. Braddock, his wife and daughter were early members in the Rockville Disciples of Christ. Although title to the building did not pass to the Church until after the death of Braddock, the congregation had the use of the building as evidenced by the 1865 Martinet & Bond map.

CONTINUED ON P. 8.1

In 1866 the congregation was formally incorporated, and in the same year, Roberta Braddock, widow of William, deeded the land to the church, the deed reciting that \$264 of the \$300 price had already been paid.<sup>7</sup>

The Rockville Christians (as they became known) probably used the old frame "meeting house" until the erection of the present building in 1892. Scharf, in 1882, mentions that the building had been "from time to time repaired and improved", and the Church histories mention no other building being erected, except a small Baptistry. Also, several obituaries of the period mention services at the "Christian Meeting House".

In 1892 the Trustees and Elders entered into an agreement with Edwin Montgomery West to construct a brick building at a cost of \$3,500. Mr. West was a member of the Church and had within the previous five years erected many of the fine residences in the newly developed West End of Rockville, including his own in the same block.

It is not believed that Mr. West had formal architectural training, but his handsome houses display the same skill evident on the Rockville Christian Church. This is his only known public building, though he bid on the building of the new Courthouse, and may have done some work at the Rockville Academy.

In the next decades, the Christian Church continued to grow and prosper. In 1950 a small education building was built adjoining the church; this is now connected to the Church. In 1953 a fire in the overheated furnace directly beneath the altar area of the Church caused extensive damage. The heat was so intense that the entire altar area was destroyed and the ceiling fixtures melted. The Church was closed for repairs until November, while \$20,000 worth of renovation and new construction was done under the auspices of Lester T. Burns, an architect and member of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

By 1963, the membership had grown so large that the Jefferson Street building was no longer sufficient. Before moving to a \$250,000 structure on Adclare Road, the members dedicated a Garden of Memories, placing a plaque dedicated to the memories of the fifteen early 19th century founders, including William McClenahan.<sup>9</sup>

In 1973 the building was sold to John Bell. Most of the original building was preserved as built in 1892. The interior space was adapted for the use of his law firm, but Mr. Bell stated that he intended to preserve "the historical and cultural significance of the Rockville Christian Church".<sup>10</sup> His success was rewarded by receipt of a 1983 award from Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd for sensitive adaptation of the sanctuary for office use.

1. Scharf, History of Western Maryland, Volume I. p. 752
2. Montgomery County Land Records, Liber BS7, folio 30 (1824) and Liber BS10 folio 423 (1841)
3. Scharf, Op. Cit.
4. Sentinel, March 22, 1856
5. the church history mentions the sacrifices of the first members, and their efforts to raise funds by sewing and baking, so if McClenahan did have a store, he probably sold their handi-work.
6. Land Records, Liber BS5, folio 226 (1832)
7. Scharf op. cit., p. 762
8. Sentinel, February 5, November 26 and December 3, 1953
9. The Evening Star, April, 1963
10. Bell, Cornelius and Shore brochure published at dedication of the new offices

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. *M: 26/10/22*

Montgomery County Land, Equity & Tax Records  
Montgomery County Sentinel; Evening Star  
Scharf, History of Western Maryland (1882)  
Christian Church history

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 16,595 square feet

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Parts of lots 52 and 53; fronting on West Jefferson Street at  
northwest corner of South Adams Street

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne W. Cissel

organization Peerless Rockville date August 1984

street & number P.O. Box 4262 telephone 762-0096

city or town Rockville state Maryland 20850

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by  
an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated  
Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and  
record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of  
individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION

## APPLICATION — PART 1

(Pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976)

Instructions: Applicant should read the instructions carefully before completing application. No Certification may be made unless a completed application form has been received (P.L. 94-455). Use typewriter or print clearly in dark ink to complete the application form. If additional space is needed to complete Part 1, use the reverse side or a separate plain sheet of paper clearly indicating the owner's name and mailing address. Part 1 of this application may be completed and sent to the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer at any time during the year, and may be sent separately or with Part 2.

### PART 1 EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. NAME OF PROPERTY: ROCKVILLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Address of property, Street: 101 W. Jefferson Street

City: Rockville County: Montgomery State: Maryland Zip Code: 20850

Name of historic district in which property is located: West Montgomery Avenue Historical District

#### 2. DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE:

(see instructions for map and photograph requirements—use reverse side if necessary)

The building is a brick structure with wooden trim. It is rectangular in plan with a tower projecting at the southeast corner. The front facing gable end has an entrance through a projecting, pointed arched portico. Small square-headed openings flank the portico; the gable has a pair of round-headed windows. (continued on back)

#### 3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

(see reverse side if necessary)

The church is a classic example of the kind of late nineteenth century building that predominates in the district. It was built in 1893 with an addition to the western side in 1950. The building is very similar to others in the district primarily because most of (continued on back)

Date of construction (if known): May 1, 1893 ☐ Original site ☐ Moved Date of alterations (if known): February 5, 1950

#### 4. NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF OWNER:

Name: John T. Bell, Frank S. Cornelius & Elbert R. Shore

Street: 101 West Jefferson Street

City: Rockville State: MD Zip Code: 20850

Telephone Number (during day): (301) 762-1717

I hereby attest that the information I have provided is, to the best of my knowledge, correct, and that I am owner of the property described above

Signature: JOHN T. BELL

Date: 6/17/82

#### For office use only

The structure described above is included within the boundaries of the National Register historic district and ☒ contributes ☐ does not contribute to the character of the district

The structure ☐ appears ☐ does not appear to meet National Register Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.6) and ☐ will likely ☐ will not be nominated to the National Register in accord with the Department of the Interior procedures (36 CFR 60)

The structure is located in a district which ☐ appears ☐ does not appear to meet National Register Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.6), ☐ will likely ☐ will not be nominated to the National Register in accord with Department of the Interior procedures (36 CFR 60), and ☐ appears ☐ does not appear to contribute to the character of said district

Signature: [Signature]  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: 7-1-82

This property has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Department of the Interior (36 CFR 67) and, if subject to depreciation under section 167 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954

I hereby certify a historic structure

does not contribute to the character of the historic district and does not merit certification as a historic structure. Reasons given on the attached sheet

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of the National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



- M: 26-10-22
- 2) The tower is divided into two stories. The first, with buttressed corners has a round arched doorway with a fanlight above the double, square-headed doors. The second story, stepped back one course, has a round window. The rook of the tower has a square, hipped base that supports an octagonal; like the nave it is covered with alternating bands of square and rounded slate tiles.

Along the nave sidewalls, the granite foundation is exposed. Above this are four courses of brick laid flush with the surface of the stone; the fifth course is a moulded brick table of quarter-round profile. Three pointed-arched windows light the nave. The projecting rafters are cut into a looped pattern.

The north end has a small northex that follows the form of the larger gable end. It once had a pointed-arched window that was bricked in; it is now a rectangular shaped window.

Connected to the western nave is the annexed education building which was built in 1950. After a fire in 1953, which gutted much of the sanctuary, the Rockville Christian Church was refinished to its prior condition.

While the outside of the eighty-nine year old church remained unaltered, reconstruction on the interior began in 1974 for the purpose of housing a law firm. The sanctuary, the last section to be renovated, is sub-divided to form five offices for attorneys and secretaries. Each office retains the elegant stained-glass windows. The pulpit area has been converted into a reception area and the lower level was converted into an office area, kitchen and law library.

With the old Rockville Academy located across the street and the Victorian design homes surrounding the area, the Rockville Christian Church represents well the history of the Rockville area.

- 3) the houses were constructed by the prominent architect/builder Edwin West. The exterior Victorian style architecture remains intact. West used the finest architectural features of that period when constructing the church; patterned slate roof, arched doorways and octagonal shaped tower with fish-scaled shingles.

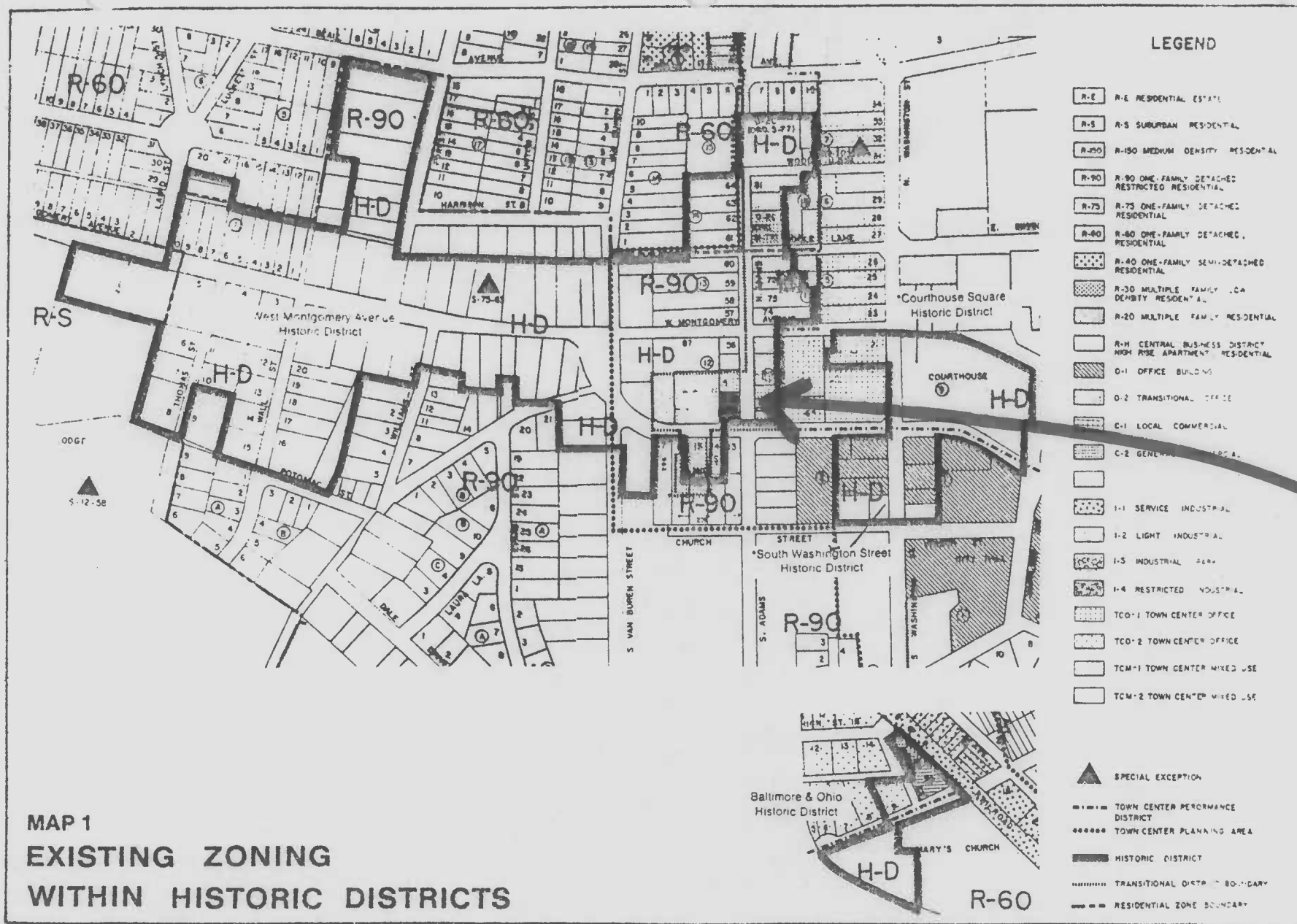
The church's congregation was founded in 1817 by William McClenagan of Tubbermour, Ireland, who was also respected as the head of the English Department of the Rockville Academy for many years. On September 26, 1866, a deed was executed by Roberta V. Braddock transferring to the congregation the property on the corner of Jefferson and Adams Streets. For 27 years the congregation met in a log cabin for worship and then in 1893 moved to the church when construction was completed.

The Rockville Christian Church is one of the older congregations among the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, in America, which is itself the oldest Protestant denomination developed in frontier America. The church, therefore, adds historical significance to the district by incorporating a scope of Rockville's past prominent figures as well as historical, religious and architectural features of the past.

# Rockville Christian Church



M: 26/10/22  
Rockville Christian Church  
101 W. Jefferson Street  
From Peerless Rockville  
calendar 1980



M: 26/10/22  
Rockville Christian Church/  
Bell Tower Building  
101 West Jefferson Street  
Rockville



M: 26/10/22

Rockville Christian Church  
(AND) BELL TOWER BLDG.

101 W. JEFFERSON ST.

RICHARD H. ANDREWS  
1608 Farragut Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20851

1009-7

AUGUST, 1984

SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ELEVATION